A Familial History

The American schooling system that we most popularly know about originally stems from, at least takes inspiration from, the Prussian schooling model of education, wherein young children are taken from their homes and told to attend mandatory schooling. There, they are told to obey and follow the demands, expectations, and orders of their peers and superiors to the letter fully without question and with absolute obedience, having to sit next to each other in rows of chairs organized in a grid-like pattern, all of which face a wall-bound board and a desk where the instructor sits. The stunts are controlled psychologically, bound to a bell that rings to tell them when they're allowed to stand up, be dismissed, or take breaks. This system was originally designed as a byproduct of a conflict with France around the time of Napoleon's reign and was set up as a way to ensure unquestioned and absolute obedience and loyalty from Prussian soldiers. The system made its way over to America in the early-mid 19th century when influential American politicians and statesmen sought a way to coerce the public into obediently working in newly opened factories. And so they made the decision to visit Prussia and study abroad there to integrate Prussian methods into American schooling. In the 1850s, this system was made official when Massachusetts became the first state to require mandatory schooling by law, with the other states following soon after. However, the Prussian method wasn't the only system that inspired American schooling. Some of its ideas stem as far back as colonial America, where the Puritans, a faction within Protestantism based in New England, valued moral purity above all else to ensure the cleansing of the soul, and saw

education as a method to achieve such cleanliness. They valued waking up early and encouraged families to homeschool their children when schools weren't available.

The modern understanding of 'laziness' originates from Puritan ideas, as well as most of what we assume to be 'good' about the world, often to the point where those who have the slightest difference in opinion to these ideas, which don't exactly have to be the opposite, are ostracised and told to act normal and be nice. On a side note, these ideas eventually culminated in the so-called 'cult of niceness' in the early 20th century, in which people adopted innocent-like behaviors possibly as a way to cope with industrialization and the looming threat of World War 1. Around this time, however, a new concept would be introduced that would change American society, if not the world, for decades to come. This concept is known as managerialism, a method of working that took root in the late 1800s and became more pronounced in the 1900s. As people fled the countryside to cities to work in factories, supervising these workers and their productivity became a necessity to make things more efficient and meet the demand for growing industrial goods and luxuries. It was partly for this reason that the 20th century saw the rise of a new type of profession: The managerial class, consisting entirely of a group of people whose entire purpose was to supervise and manage people's productivity and work schedule, offering them an hourly wage to support their families in exchange for their labor. This, in combination with a recent invention of the early 20th century, consumption-based capitalism, an ideology and lifestyle centered around the idea of the consumption of goods and services that would come to dominate all aspects of

American society and culture for the foreseeable future. However, much like anything in this world, these aspects of the 20th century would have consequences both near and far-reaching that would make people feel anguished and question the very nature of what it meant to be human.

These consequences secretly manifested during the Industrial Revolution, however, grew more pronounced over the 19th and 20th centuries wherein the mental and spiritual health of people would slowly be eroded for the sake of physical prosperity and the endless dream of progress that eluded to the idea of recreating heaven on Earth with the industrial prowess on machinery and ideological systems and mindsets of the people, whether it be consumerism, the cult of niceness, communism, fascism, or something else entirely. One of these was the growth of bureaucratic power in the early 1900s, when the federal government began to impose mass taxation of income, property, inheritance, and social security, among other things. A reason for this was to initially fund and manage the ongoing conflict of WW1; however, it was also to maintain the system of consumerism and, in turn, managerialism. As time went on, people would spend less time with their families, as they had to stress about meeting the demands and expectations of their bosses. It initially started with fathers of households, however, women would soon fill in this role with the rise of feminism in the 1890s-1920s, a movement involving women who desired to leave the mundaneness of traditional life, seek the same opportunities as men, and find a way to support thor families, women were encouraged to move away from their households and into factories. Even children, who were already being schooled under the Prussian system, were

sent to work in factories at some point, desperate to do anything for money during WWW1 and the Great Depression that followed soon after.

In World War 2, as the men were out fighting and dying in battle, women had to fill in for the roles of manufacturing, operators, and other tasks in factories and offices, which started to make them question their role as a gender and if they needed men. All the while, as both the mother and father were out working and defending the country, the children were left to be raised in daycare centers as they had no one at home to look after them. There, they would effectively be raised by strangers instead of their parents and siblings. After the war ended, families would finally be reunited as the men came home and women began to settle down, celebrating their triumphant victory. However, just as not all things are fated to last, this joyous reunion would be short-lived. As husbands and wives cheered out on the streets and in the sheets, the resulting matrimony would lead to a boom in the population, a population that would never know the horrors and conflicts of war, a population infamously known as ‘the baby boomer generation’. Due to this growing boom population, there was a growing need for housing that came forth around the time of a new type of housing environment, the suburb. The suburb was a type of environment that consisted only of residential houses, with each one being separated by fences and rows of them being divided by a single road in the middle, and these environments were only accessible by car. Seeing this new and clean environment, families all across the country took the opportunity to move to these suburbs. However, since suburban houses were relatively small at the time, a new

family system had to be introduced, the nuclear family, a familial system in which only the parents and children live together under the same roof.

As the men came back from fighting, they could rejoin the workforce as if nothing had happened in the first place, leaving women at home alone while their kids were off at school. However, given how it was seen as taboo at the time for women to own a car and drive, they were essentially forced to stay at home all day by themselves with nothing else to do other than housework or watch television. As time went on and the baby boomer generation started to grow older, they began to question the underlying principles and traditions that had upheld the very foundations of society they were born into. This started with the rebellious urge to spite their parents, who wished for nothing but the absolute best lives they could give their kids due to the horrors and hardships that were faced decades ago, and would later culminate in a period known as the ‘counterculture of the 1960s’ wherein the young boomer generation would go on to form movements that went against the teachings of the last 70+ years. This included the denouncement of colonialism, segregation, and strict societal rules in exchange for the encouragement of free and open love, recreational stimulants, and radical forms of music. The boomers became so detached from the horrors of war and strife that they thought of themselves as the dawn of a new era of history, one where the past need not apply in order to build a new future. However, it was their parents’ generation, not them, who funded these movements. Along these movements came the invention of the birth control pill, a pill that allowed couples to copulate without the fear of pregnancy,

encouraging young people to seek intimate relationships outside of marriage, much to the shock and detriment of their parents, who, despite industrialization, still held onto some semblance of tradition.

However, as the boomers became older and more populous, so too would their ideas. With so many of them being raised in isolated suburban environments, these ideals grew more pronounced with each passing day. As the Cold War loomed over the horizon, the rising threat of nuclear annihilation and the Red Scare instilled a sense of panic and urgency into the population, making them feel as if they had to fully live in the moment with little regard for how their actions would affect the future. One such action would involve the growth of the cult of niceness, whereby, as a result of WW2 and the spread of nazism during that time, America, as well as the Western world as a whole, would grow deeply traumatized by anything the nazis held dear, and so desired to be the exact opposite of what they were. In turn, the West slowly grew resentful of traditional masculinity, nationalism, military pride, and other traits of the World Wars such as honor, intellectualism, heroism, dignity, warrior-based culture, and even individual personalities and other aspects of human nature in exchange for 'being nice' and choosing not to offend anyone (Note: I do not in ANY way sympathize with or condone the acts of nazism or any atrocity committed in the World Wars, and deeply apologize to anyone who misunderstood what they just read). The lack of such traits in the Western world would leave an ideological and spiritual hole and a lack of purpose in the population that would seek materialism as a substitute, along with growing bureaucratic government power. Meanwhile, with the free

love movement of the boomer generation, and women being isolated in suburban households, the idea of feminism slowly grew from the notion of desiring the same opportunities as men to the notion of not needing a man to survive in general, and be happy with the advent of machinery making housework less important and the growing distrust of traditional gender roles. Moreover, during this time, legal systems and courts began to float around the idea known as ‘no-fault divorce’.

No-fault divorce involves the idea of a married couple being allowed to divorce at any time without any social or economic consequences. With the boomers having no traditional frame of reference for how to navigate traditional relationships, as well as the feminism of the counterculture movement, young couples, especially women, would think it easier to divorce their partners rather than talk through their problems as suitable adults. With the boomers already being in relationships outside of wedlock and growing too reliant on birth control, many couples experienced accidental pregnancies as a result of a lack of planning and responsible decision-making. As such, many children would grow up in insecure households, mostly with only a single parent in the house. This heavily affected families of African-American descent, who previously held one of the highest marriage rates in the country. As a result of the mass divorces, the federal government decided to step in and take the opportunity to help divorced parents by introducing a mass welfare system, which would have the future effect of replacing the role of fathers within households with that of the government. African Americans would come to grow up without any masculine or even feminine role models to look up to, leading them to seek comfort in gangs while

attempting to adopt pseudo, false masculine traits to fill in the void left behind by absent parents. As families grew more divided, women grew more resentful of men and men grew more distrustful of women, while older generations only turned a blind eye to these issues, treating them as normal. Women would often play mind games with men, mock them for showing naturally masculine traits, and bully and harass men for not being ‘manly’ or ‘nice’ enough. In single-parent households, children would not get to see their parents most of the day, as women were pressured to enter the workforce as a way to out-compete men all the while the government supported feminism as a way to collect taxes from double the population.

Mental health became a taboo subject to talk about and was generally seen as a weakness and liability in the face of bureaucratic cooperations imprinting themselves onto the lives of the average American, along with a materialistic, consumption-based culture being at an all-time high. One way to acquire a job at these corporations was to own a graduate degree from a university, which quickly became a symbol of status and wealth for families of all backgrounds, prompting them to pressure their children to attend the absolute best schools, reminding them that they would lead lives as failures if they didn’t meet their expectations, which only added to the mental toll these children were forced to bear, And even then, children, at least in America, were expected to be able to move out of their home at the age of 18 and live on their own when houses costed a fraction of what they would in the future. Meanwhile, a few decades before the cusp of the new millennium, a new change would be brought upon American society, this time in a more physical light. After

America won the Second World War and entered the Cold War, the nation soon began to realize that it held onto an extra surplus of wheat and corn that not many knew what to do with, that is, until the companies that grew and processed these crops saw a prime opportunity to sell them to the public. However, they not only convinced people to eat more wheat and corn but also convinced them to change the diet of the average person, with the promise of it being healthy. These companies would spend large amounts of money and resources promoting the idea of a new way of eating that would soon come to be known as the ‘Food Pyramid’. It was a type of food system wherein the base of the pyramid promoted foods rich in carbohydrates such as bread, pasta, and rice, while at the top, foods such as meat and discouraged. However, this would prove to be a fatal mistake.

The food companies that have pushed for the food pyramid were the same ones that went on a campaign to vilify and demonize the consumption of meat and fat, specifically red meat and animal-based fat, convincing the public that they were unhealthy, and causing numerous problems for heart health. However, behind the scenes, doctors and food scientists were confused and puzzled at this attempt at manipulating nutritional science and spreading confusion as to what exactly is healthy for the sake of monetary gain. However, these complaints would soon be silenced as the food companies went out of their way to pay off these doctors, as well as the government, with their money. The reason these doctors were initially against this new dietary plan had to do with the claim that meat and fat were unhealthy was originally based on a study depicting the author noticing a correlation, not causation, between fat and poor heart

health that had very little evidence, and was more of an inference or educated guess. Contrary to what has been stated by the food pyramid, meat and fat have a wide variety of uses when consumed by the human body, and have served as a staple for many cultures all over the world since the dawn of humanity hundreds of thousands of years ago. Meat by itself contains most of the nutrients, vitamins, and proteins that a human needs, while animal fats provide additional vitamins as well as maintaining the body's temperature, immune system, and hormonal levels. Protein in general is not only used to build muscle but is also used by every single part of the body in one way or another, whether it is forming the very foundations of bone health or repairing damaged and old cells. It can even be used in combination with fat to act as the main source of fuel for the body in place of carbohydrates, which, contrary to what has been stated by health advisors since the food pyramid's establishment, only serves as a secondary fuel source when fat and protein are not available for consumption. With this information in mind, the population of America would grow weaker, both physically and mentally, as well as witness the rise of a new threat from within: obesity. As the food companies went to replace fat and protein with carbohydrates, they soon realized they needed to replace fat with something as enticing as fat traditionally provided foods with extra flavor. This something would become the food industry's new favorite toy and hook on the world: sugar.

The introduction of sugar within the American food system would only make its people more obese, as it, along with carbohydrates, holds the unique property of storing excess fat and water within the body via a process known as Insulin

Resistance. This feature of the human body is activated when one of the body's digestive organs, the pancreas, secretes a hormone known as insulin whenever the body consumes starches, carbohydrates, sugars, and even alcohol, as they are all variants of the same molecule, that being glucose. In contrast, alcohol is a fermented form of it. Insulin stores fat within specialized cells as the body uses the foods previously described as a secondary fuel source, while these cells build up over time throughout the body, waiting to be used if the body runs out of glucose to use for fuel. As food companies integrated sugar into people's foods, they did not stop there, however. They sought to replace animal fats with another product, seed oils. Seed oils, as the name suggests, are oils that are extracted from seeds as a byproduct of the industrial processing of various plants, mainly with seeds that are toxic when consumed by humans. These oils became popularized in the late 1800s as a substitute for animal fats in many uses, from cooking to soap-making, when industrial manufacturers had little idea of what else to use them for. However, unlike animal fats, these oils are naturally formed to stay as a liquid at room temperature, and oxidize or go rancid over time, making them challenging to store in most places for long periods. To work around this issue, manufacturers came up with the solution of injecting hydrogen gas into seed oils to make them solid and more shelf-stable.

Sources:

- *"The Big Fat Surprise"* by Nina Teicholz
- *The Feminine Mystique"* by Betty Friedan

- *"The Managerial Revolution: What is Happening in the World"* by James Burnham
- *"The Puritan Origins of the American Self"* by Sacvan Bercovitch
- *“The Prussian Elementary Schools"* by Levi Seeley
- *"Good Calories, Bad Calories"* by Gary Taubes
- Origins of the American Public School System
- A Factory for Factory Workers: The Prussian School System
- Industrialization in the U.S
- The secret history of feminism
- Why everyone is cooking with animals fats again